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ABSTRACT

This action research project sought to increase parental involvement to improve academic achievement in the subjects of reading and math for fourth- through sixth-grade students in two Midwestern metropolitan schools. An increased number of non-English speaking parents and working parents, a lack of parent training, and teacher resistance to parent involvement pointed to a need for improved parental involvement. Thirty-four student-parent pairs participated. Four types of interventions were attempted: using a variety of communication tools to enforce two-way communication; providing information about how parents can assist learning at home; regularly assigning interactive homework that requires interaction with parents; and distributing student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis. Both pre- and post-intervention surveys concerning communication frequency and parental academic involvement with their children were administered to students and parents; reading and math tests were used to measure academic improvement in the students. Post-intervention data indicated a modest increase in parental involvement; a slight academic improvement in reading; and no improvement in math performance. (Appendices include survey forms, a sample newsletter, and a homework introduction note. Contains 20 references.) (DLH)

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INCREASING PARENT INVOLVEMENT TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN READING AND MATH

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Chicago, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for increasing parental involvement to improve academic achievement in the subjects of reading and math. The targeted population consisted of fourth through sixth grade students in a major Midwestern metropolitan area. The lack of parental involvement problems were documented through data revealing lower academic performance, as well as, teacher, parent and student surveys.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that parents and students reported a lack of parental involvement due to the increased number of non-English speaking parents, increased number of working parents, lack of parent training, and teacher resistance to parent involvement.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of four major categories of interventions:

- Use of a variety of communication tools to enforce two-way communication.
- Provide information regarding how parents can assist learning at home.
- Regularly assign interactive homework that will require interaction with parents.
- Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis.

Post intervention data indicated a modest increase in parent involvement and a slight academic improvement in the areas of math and reading. No improvements however were exhibited in the subject area of math.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement

Some students of the targeted fourth through sixth grade classes may perform lower academically due to lack of active parental involvement at home. Evidence of existence of this problem includes assessments of academic performance, parent and student surveys, and bi-monthly checklists for parents.

The Local Setting

School A

Students of the targeted class attend an elementary school with an enrollment of 479 students in grades kindergarten through eighth. Of these students, 88.5% are Caucasian, 9.8% are Hispanic, and 1.7% are Asian/Pacific Islander. According to the 1998 School A Report Card, 12.1% of the students come from low-income families and 10.6% of these students are Limited-English-Proficient. The school has an attendance rate of 95% and a student mobility rate of 9.7%. The chronic truancy rate is 0.8%. The parents/guardians of 81.6% of the students in this school made at least one contact with the students' teachers during the school year (School A Report Card, 1998).

The professional staff for this elementary school is approximately 43. Of the 43 staff, 21 are academic classroom teachers, 5 are full-time aides, and 1 is a part-time health aide. There are five special teachers, one each for gym, music, art, library, and band. The staff also includes one teacher each for resource special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), speech, gifted, and social work. In addition, there are three part-time staff for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and adaptive physical education. There is also a principal, a secretary, a nurse, as well as one part-time and two full-time custodians (School A Report Card, 1998).

The program for this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes, with six periods of 45 minutes. Each period is devoted to the core subjects (math, language arts, science,

and social studies). The amount of time spent for each subject per week depends upon the grade level of the students. One 45 minute period per day is for either physical education or fine arts. There is a 45 minute lunch period for all students, and the students in first through fifth grades also get a 15 minute recess each morning. Some students are also pulled out for special circumstances, such as: speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, social work, ESL, or gifted classes. The school also has three self-contained special education classes, and one pull-out resource special education class. The average class size is 22.3 students (School A Report Card, 1998).

There are several committees of teachers within the school. Each month the Building and Safety Committee, which consists of the principal, two regular education teachers, one special teacher, and one special education teacher, discusses any issues or concerns regarding matters pertaining to the school. There are also Collaborative Assistance Team (CAT) meetings which meet monthly and consists of the principal, social worker, resource special education teacher, a regular education teacher, and the teacher who is referring the child for the meeting. This team discusses the concerns of the classroom teacher and offers recommendations regarding the child's academic and/or behavioral issues (Personal Communication from principal, 1998).

There are several after school activities offered at School A. There is a recreational sports program for all fifth and sixth graders. Junior High students (sixth through eighth graders) can participate in such activities as student council, newspaper, fishing club, chess club, cheerleading, girls' volleyball, boys' basketball, and track. (Personal Communication from principal, 1998).

This school was built in 1954. It is U-shaped and is only one level. There is a total of 21 classrooms for grades kindergarten through eighth. The facility also contains a computer lab, a library, music room, art room, gymnasium, social work room, teachers' lounge, three janitors' rooms, and a main office. The first wing contains the first through third grade classrooms, the

computer lab, the janitors' office, a boys' and girls' bathroom, and the main office. The middle wing houses the gym, teachers' lounge, library, art room, Social Worker's room/office, a boys' and girls' bathroom, a teachers' bathroom, janitors' room, and four classrooms (the kindergarten, resource, one special education, and the Speech/Gifted/ESL classrooms). The third wing has the fourth through eighth grade classrooms, two special education classrooms, the music room, a boys' and girls' bathroom, and the janitors' room (Personal Communication from principal, 1998).

The school building is located on a corner, and is surrounded by residential streets. There are blacktops and grass fields surrounding one side and the back of the building. These are used during recess and for an area for the students to line up. The blacktops are divided into three sections, one for the primary grades, one the intermediate grades, and one for the junior high grades.

School B

Students of the targeted class attend an elementary school with an enrollment of 451 students in grades kindergarten through eighth. Of these students, 88% are Caucasian, 9.5% are Hispanic, and 2.4% are Asian/Pacific Islander. According to the 1998 School B Report Card, 7.3% of the students come from low-income families and 8.6% of these students are Limited-English-Proficient. Also, 26 students qualify for the free lunch program, however, only 16 partake in it. The school has an attendance rate of 95.8%, and a student mobility rate of 17%. There are no chronic truants. The parents/guardians of 99.5% of the students made at least one contact with the students' teachers during the school year (School B Report Card, 199).

The professional staff for this elementary school is 40. Of the staff, 17 are regular education, self-contained classroom teachers. There are two special education classroom teachers, each of whom have one teacher's aide. The faculty also includes five special teachers, one each for gym, music, art, library, and band. In addition to these, there is one teacher each for resource special education, ESL, speech, and gifted. A social worker, principal, secretary,

librarian, and a library aide are also on staff. The school also has an occupational therapist, a nurse, a half-time nurse's aide, and two full-time and one part-time custodians.

The program for this school includes a school day of 6 hours and 20 minutes. Classes are heterogeneously assigned with an average size of 23.8 students. The school day consist of six periods. Forty-five minutes are devoted to each of the core subjects which are math, language arts, science, and social studies. The amount of time spent for each subject per week depends upon the grade level of the students. Students leave for one 45 minute period per day to attend either a physical education or fine arts class. Certain students are also pulled out for special services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, social work, ESL, resource, or gifted. A 10 minute recess is given to the first through fifth grade students each morning. All students, except for kindergarten, have a 45 minute lunch which includes a 15 minute recess (Personal Communication from principal, 1998).

Several after school activities and services are offered to the student body. Both male and female junior high students (sixth through eighth) can participate on various athletic teams such as basketball, volleyball, cheerleading, and track. In addition to this, junior high students can become involved in clubs like student council, newspaper, and yearbook. Also, an after school study help program is offered for the sixth through eighth grade students. (Personal Communication from principal, 1998).

The school is 41 years old. The layout is U-shaped. The junior high wing is made up of eight classrooms, a library, an office for the custodians, and a music room. This wing also includes separate washrooms for girls, boys, and teachers. The other wing consists of 10 classrooms, an office for the social worker, the main office, and student restrooms. The middle wing includes a gym, a kitchen, a teachers' lounge, an art room, and a kindergarten classroom. The building has four entrances. The fourth through eighth grades line up on the same side of the building, however enter at the doors of their appropriate wing. There is a black top area and a fenced in field which are used as a playground during recess. Grades kindergarten through third

line up on the opposite side of the building where there is another fenced in playground area also used during recess.

Community Setting

Schools A and B are both located in the same community which is 15 miles southwest of a major Midwestern metropolitan area. The 1990 United States Census reports the total population of 27,600 persons with a median age of 34.3. Of the people, 91.3% are of Caucasian ethnic backgrounds, while 7.4% are of Hispanic, and 1.2% are of Asian/Pacific Islander descent.

As for education, 70.1% of the community members have attained a high school diploma or higher. Only 7.5% have received a bachelor's degree or higher. Of the 21,552 employable people, 66.6% are in the labor force and 5.1% are unemployed (US Census, 1990).

The total number of households occupied in the community is 9,171. Of this 82.9% are owner occupied. The median home value is $89,600 and renters pay a median amount of $462 (US Census, 1990).

The district consists of seven elementary schools, five of which are kindergarten through eighth, and two which are kindergarten through sixth. The total enrollment is 3,143 students and there are approximately 175 full-time staff members. The pupil-teacher ratio is 15.4:1 and the pupil-administrator ratio is 239.1:1 (School A and B Report Cards, 1998).

The ethnic background for the full-time staff includes 98.9% Caucasian, 0.6% Hispanic and 0.6% Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender of teachers for this district includes 16.2% male and 83.8% female. The average teaching experience is 18.5 years. Of the full-time staff, 60.4% of the teachers have a Bachelor's degree and 39.6% have a Master's degree or above. The average teacher salary is $44,524. The average administrator salary is $64,847. The operating expenditure per pupil is $5,486 (School A and B Report Cards, 1998).

National Context of the Problem

Parents are a vital component of a child's life. Parenting includes taking care of and supporting a child. Support should include becoming actively involved in the child's academic

life. The National PTA has consistently demonstrated that effectively involving parents and families in support of children and their education produces meaningful and lasting results (Dykstra, 1998). Research has also indicated that students whose parents are not involved in their education tend to struggle academically. Consequently, the government, as well as teacher preparation programs, have designated reforms concerning this issue.

Much research has shown that parent involvement increases success of student achievement. Programs designed with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than otherwise identical programs that do not involve parents (Henderson & Marburger, 1990). Children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved (Henderson & Marburger, 1990). Young children whose backgrounds place them at risk of failing or falling far behind will outperform their friends for years if their parents are given training in home teaching (Henderson, 1988). Older children whose performance starts to decline can be straightened out by home reinforcement, especially when parents reward good performance (Henderson, 1988). According to Purett (1998), students with involved fathers do better in school than kids who have less connected dads. He also states that fathered kids are known to miss less school, stay in school longer, hang in there when frustrated, and tend to have more faith in themselves as problem solvers.

Parents these days do not have a great deal of time because of their jobs or other family obligations. Parents are spending 40% less time with their children than mothers and fathers did in 1960. Fifty-one percent of the parents who participated in a poll admitted that their young adolescents got less of their time than they did five years ago (Giannetti & Sagarese, 1998). Children whose parents are less involved are more often at risk of failing in school (Smith et al., as cited in Moles, 1995). According to Henderson (1988), while parent involvement has been on the decline, our children have been falling behind and dropping out. However, she also states that students who are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help.

Due to the recent research findings, many are calling for an increase of parent involvement in a child's academic career. The federal government has issued documents to help schools organize parent participation programs (Finn, 1988). Also, the National PTA has developed the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs to help implement effective parent involvement programs with the aim of improving students' academic performance (Sullivan, 1998). In addition to this, the National Education Association has embarked on a major effort to train teachers to work more closely with parents (Henderson, 1988).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of parent involvement in students' education, survey and interview results were examined and noted. In September, survey consent forms were sent home for parents/guardians to sign (see Appendix A). Then, the previous year's teachers, the students, and the parents of the targeted fourth, fifth and sixth graders answered a battery of questions developed by the researchers. A sample of these questions can be found in Appendices B through F. Inquiries were made regarding student's homework and study habits, as well as frequency of parent participation in school related areas. In addition to this, the students of the targeted group were tested in the areas of reading and math by the use of unit tests. This was performed early in the year without any teacher initiated parent involvement strategies.

Figure 1 displays the communication frequency between parents and students as reported by the students. They were asked about the number of times their parents inquired about their school day and homework as well as how often parental help was verbally sought. Based on the total number of survey responses regarding the frequency of communication verbally sought, 29% of the students reported that they always communicate with their parents, where as 13% said usually, 46% responded sometimes, and 13% never did communicate with their parents.

Survey Question	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Discuss school day	16%	9%	63%	13%
Discuss homework	50%	16%	28%	6%
Ask for help on HW	22%	6%	63%	9%
Ask someone to study with you	28%	19%	31%	22%

Figure 1: Communication frequency according to the students

The surveys filled out by the students also inquired about who the main source of academic help was in regards to the checking and assisting of homework assignments. Figure 2 shows the responses to these two questions. Fifty-two percent of the students reported that a parent aids with homework. Twenty-five percent said they did it themselves. Thirteen percent noted that they were assisted by a sibling and 3% responded that a friend did this. Eight percent of the students reported that they chose another source for assistance.

Survey question	Myself	A Parent	A friend	A sibling	Other
Who checks your homework	28%	59%	3%	6%	3%
Who helps you with school work	22%	44%	3%	19%	13%

Figure 2: Academic assistance frequency according to the students

Figure 3 summarizes the responses of parents to survey question concerning frequency of involvement/communication in school related events/issues. Items included attending school functions such as open house, parent teacher conferences, PTA meetings, etc. The parents were also asked about how many times they contacted their child's teacher or principal and how often they help with class activities or field trips. Twenty-six percent of the parents responded always to these questions. Ten percent frequently did these things. Twenty-five percent occasionally were involved or communicated and 38% said they never participated in these things.

Survey item	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Attend Open House	63%	19%	15%	4%
Attend Parent Teacher Conf.	89%	4%	0%	7%
Attend plays, sporting events	22%	22%	19%	37%
Attend PTA meetings	7%	0%	7%	89%
Contact your child's teacher	15%	19%	44%	22%
Contact the principal	15%	7%	37%	44%
Chaperone field trips	4%	4%	33%	59%
Help with class activities	4%	7%	44%	44%

Figure 3: Parental communication/involvement within the school according to parents

The parents were also asked about the extent of academic involvement they offered for their child at home and the results are shown in Figure 4. The survey questions concentrated on such things as going to the library with their child, buying educational materials and reading or listening to their child read. The parents also responded to the frequency of participation in their child's homework and study habits as were as how often their child sought their help. According to these questions, 42% always provide academic help at home, 31% responded frequently, 18% occasionally, and 11% never.

Survey Item	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Go to the library with your child	4%	37%	44%	11%
Purchase educational materials	48%	22%	26%	4%
Read aloud to your child	15%	37%	26%	22%
Listen to your child read	37%	44%	15%	4%
Discuss your child's school day	70%	19%	7%	4%
Child seeks your help with school work	48%	41%	7%	4%
Help child with homework on regular basis	48%	22%	11%	19%
Study with your child for tests	67%	26%	4%	4%

Figure 4: Parental academic involvement at home according to the parents

The interviews conducted with the previous year's teachers provided a great deal of information regarding the extent of involvement from the parents of the targeted class. All four of the teachers reported using the telephone as a way of communicating with parents. Three of the four teachers implemented daily assignment books/logs that provided space for parent comments and signatures. Unfortunately, the teachers had a difficult time getting parents to sign the books/logs consistently and rarely received any kind of feedback on them. The teachers stated that they were usually the ones who would initiate communication, but when they did notify a parent, an immediate response was often given.

When parent involvement in the form of attendance at school events such as open house, parent/teacher conference, or guest speaker days, was discussed in the interviews, the teachers sadly stated that the number of participants was very low. The teachers seemed most disturbed by the number of parents who did not come to pick up and discuss their child's report card.

The teachers were also asked about the role they tried to have parents play in regards to homework. None of the teachers assigned any kind of interactive homework

on a regular basis. They mainly wanted the parents to check their child's daily homework for completion and accuracy. Two of the four teachers reported that they had a few parents request supplemental material.

Over all the teachers felt that they tried their best to communicate with the parents of the targeted students, however they were met with much resistance and/or poor response.

Before any interventions were implemented the students of the targeted class were assessed by unit tests in the subject areas of math and reading. The results are summarized in Figure 5. As indicated, there were a high number of students who performed below average on both unit tests. As the figure shows, 32% of the students received either a grade of a D or F on their math test, and 36% scored below average on their reading test. In reading, only 33% had a score that was above average, and 32% of the scores were average. In math, a high percentage of students did score above average, 53%, and only 15% of the scores were average.

Grading Scale	Math Unit Tests	Reading Unit Tests
A (93-100%)	24%	18%
B (85-92%)	29%	15%
C (76-84%)	15%	32%
D (70-75%)	26%	21%
F (0-69%)	6%	15%

Figure 5: Unit test scores prior to parent involvement interventions

Probable Causes

Site Based

After recalling past teaching experiences and analyzing the data, probable causes were determined as to why there is a lack of parental involvement in education today.

The teachers began by reflecting on their encounters with the parents of their former students. Both teachers had experienced parents who did not speak English, who both worked, or who were not college educated. They also recalled various conversations with other teachers who spoke out against involving parents. In addition to this, data was collected resulting in many causes for uninvolved parents.

According to the student's emergency cards, 6 of the 34 students come from homes where English was not spoken. In addition to this, it was reported that an additional 6 students spoke English, as well as, a foreign language at home. A summary of these numbers are presented in Figure 6. The teachers remembered participating in conferences where at least one, but often times several sets of parents, could not effectively communicate due to a foreign language barrier. Sometimes when this occurred, the student would accompany the parent and try to translate. If a translator was not available, the teacher would conduct the meeting in English while the parent nodded and smiled. In both instances, little or no successful communication transpired.

Figure 6 also displays the high number of students who come from homes where at least one parent, but in many cases, both parents are out of the house working. Of the 34 students, 25 of them come from a two parent working household. Only 9 out of 34 have only one parent working. The teachers found that many parents were not at home when the students arrived at the end of the school day. Some parent work schedules compelled them to not see their child at all after school or until the next morning. This often resulted in lack of homework supervision and assistance, not to mention making it extremely difficult for the teacher to communicate to the parent via phone.

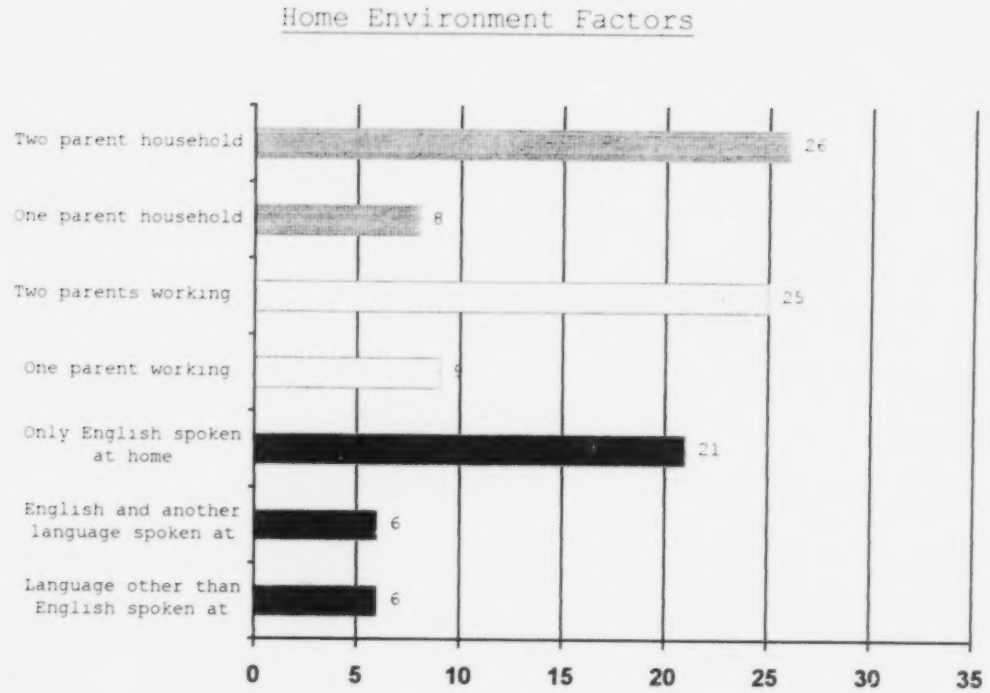

Figure 6: Home environment factors from the emergency cards

As stated in Chapter 1, the percentage of parents who attained a college degree is minimal. On various occasions, parents voiced their lack of knowledge and ability to aid in their child's academic career. Along with this parent admission, the teachers also found that many parents were not aware of the numerous strategies to enhance learning at home. Many of these strategies do not require knowledge of the subject matter.

Resistance to parent involvement resistance among teachers was also experienced. At various times throughout their careers, the teachers met with fellow colleagues who rejected the idea of including parents. Some felt it was too time

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consuming, where as others did see the need for it. For whatever personal reasons, opposition was apparent.

Literature Based

The literature suggests several causes for lack of parent involvement. Some causes may include lack of parent training, increased number of working parents, increased number of non-English speaking families, and teacher resistance.

According to Henderson (1988), educators worry that untrained parents might interfere with today's teaching techniques, or disrupt the learning environment. Because many parents believe that they are inadequately skilled in many subject areas, they tend to shy away from becoming involved with school related matters. One such parent stated, "It's hard to define my role as a parent in the day-to-day operation of school. I feel things are out of my realm and my participation as a parent isn't needed." (Burns 1993, p.12). This insufficiency in training is not solely a parent issue. Unfortunately, many educators lack the necessary skills to work with parents (Burns, 1993). This inability often contributes to less success among students in many educational programs.

Job and family demands, as well as changes in family structure, leave little free time for many parents to involve themselves in their children's schooling. According to Burns (1993) the proportion of women in the work force with children below age 18 rose from 40% to 65% between 1970 and 1988. This increase in working women will continue to have a significant impact on parent involvement because mothers have traditionally assumed most of the responsibility for maintaining communication with school and assisting their children with school work at home.

Differences between parents and teachers related to ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and education represent another barrier to school-home partnerships (Burns, 1993). Communication can be complicated when parents feel unwelcome at school due to their foreign language. Often, these non-English speaking

parents become discouraged and withdraw themselves from any contact with their children's teachers.

Teacher resistance is another factor that inhibits successful parent involvement in the education process. Extensive interviews discovered that while parents were eager to play all roles at school, educators were more comfortable in relegating parents to insubstantial bake sale roles, leaving them feeling frustrated, belittled, and left out (Swap, 1990). Though the original impression held that parents are responsible for the lack of involvement, it is school practices that discourage and sometimes completely avoid the use of parent participation. Although most school officials say they want parent participation, in practice they may offer parents only limited opportunity for involvement (Amundson, 1988).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Much of today's educational literature reports that there is an association between parent involvement and greater achievement in learning. Therefore, numerous methods to increase parent involvement have been suggested. Such strategies include increasing communication between teacher and parents, involving parents with limited English proficiency, providing information regarding how parents can enhance learning at home, and encouraging parental academic engagement at home.

The correlation between home and school is extremely important in regards to academic achievement. Rich (1987) compares the relationship between family and school to that of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. She explains, "both are necessary to each other - complementary, non-duplicative, unique, and vital" (p.9). Substantial amounts of educational research has suggested that when this relationship is supported, nurtured, and strengthened, students can increase their educational accomplishments. According to Swap (1990), the evidence that parent involvement enhances children's school success is overwhelming. Significant benefits for students have been reported. A National Institute of Education (NIE) study was conducted and concluded that children with higher scores on measures of achievement, competence, and intelligence had parents who held higher educational expectations and aspirations for them than did parents of children who did not score as high (Becher, as cited in Akimoff, 1996). In another study, Burns (1993) noted that improved student attendance, motivation, self-esteem, and behavior result from meaningful parent involvement. These improved elements are often contributing factors for academic success.

Communication between teachers and parents is an indispensable component of the educational process. Standards have been developed by the National PTA to help

implement parent involvement with the aim of improving students' academic performance (Sullivan, 1998). The first standard listed is regular communication between home and school. Communication can come in a wide variety of ways. Personal contacts, such as phone calls, can greatly strengthen communication. Routinely, teachers use the phone to inform parents of inappropriate behavior or unsatisfactory grades. However, they are rarely used to convey positive messages. A positive phone call from school can improve the atmosphere between the home and school, as well as encourage everyone to believe that all children can learn (Moles, 1995). It is also reported that parents need to receive at least two or three positive phone calls over the course of the year to be effective (Moles, 1995). Effective communication is not limited to phone contacts. Many parents enjoy and appreciate knowing what is going on in their child's classroom and this can be done via a newsletter. This strategy can allow a teacher to share more information about the children in daily school life, the classroom curriculum, and about themselves as genuine people in a more realistic and authentic context (Barnett, 1995).

Increasing communication among limited-English speaking parents can require some special adjustments. All parents need to feel comfortable if they want to successfully communicate with teachers. When the language barrier is lifted, the comfort level can increase. Moles (1995) suggests that teachers translate written notices, integrate bilingual and multi-cultural material in the classroom and make special efforts to welcome these parents who visit the school.

Teachers need to promote and support parenting skills to achieve a successful academic program. Teachers could provide an accessible parent/family information and resource center to support parents and families with training, resources and other services (Dykstra, 1998). When parents show an interest in their children's education and maintain high expectations for their performance, they are promoting attitudes that are

critical to achievement. Schools can help by providing helpful information and skills (Henderson, 1988).

Some parents are unaware of what their role should be in their child's education. Creating job descriptions can help inform parents. The job descriptions do not need to be complicated; indeed, they should be short and to the point, outlining duties that should be performed by the parent, where, and when (Barber & Patin, 1997). Teachers can provide parents with many ideas and materials to support learning at home. Tips for parents can be sent home in the form of a poster or brochure, which can be posted on the refrigerator or bulletin board at home (Jones, 1991). The topics can be on general or specific topics, such as reading, math, study skills, homework, motivation, and others.

Parents can be an integral part of a child's academic learning outside of the classroom. At home, parents can monitor time spent on academics, discuss their child's school day, and inspect assignments. In regards to homework, Van Dorn (1998) suggests parents consider themselves a coach. They should be available to assist, support, compliment, and praise their children. In addition to this, some parents can tutor their child, however, this requires some degree of subject matter knowledge of teaching strategies (Finn, 1998).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of various parent involvement strategies during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the parents of the fourth through sixth grade students of the targeted classes will increase their involvement in their children's academic education, as measured by pre/post parent and student surveys.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis to enforce two-way communication.

2. Provide information regarding how parents can assist learning at home.

As a result of increased parent involvement during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the fourth through sixth grade students of the targeted classes will increase overall academic achievement in the areas of math and reading, as measured by unit tests.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Regularly assign interactive homework that will require students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class.

2. Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis.

Project Action Plan

I. Data collection to show evidence of the problem

A. Parents will complete the pre-survey (September)

B. Students will complete the pre-survey (September)

C. Previous teachers will be interviewed regarding parents of targeted class (September)

II. Use of a variety of communication tools to enforce two-way communication

A. Phone calls (on-going)

1. Positive

2. Concerned

B. Provide school fax numbers (September)

C. Teacher checklists (weekly)

1. Regarding completion of work

2. Regarding graded assignments

D. Assignment books (daily)

1. Signed by parent

E. Provide translation for non-English speaking parents (as needed)

1. Important messages and letters

III. Provide information regarding how parents can assist learning at home

A. Newsletters (monthly)

B. Send information sheet to guide parents in helping with a particular skill for an assignment (as needed)

C. Program orientation at open house (September)

1. Describe expectations and goals
2. Provide contact information
3. Explain process for questions and concerns

IV. Assign interactive homework for math and reading

A. Reading project cards from literature text (weekly)

B. Math skill games (weekly)

C. Math re-teaching sheets (weekly)

V. Distribute student work for parental comment and review

A. Graded assignment folder (weekly)

Methods of Assessment

The following methods of assessment will be used by the researchers. First, both the parents and the students will complete a survey. The parents will respond to questions regarding their parental involvement at home, and the students will respond to questions regarding their homework habits at home. This will be completed in

September and January. Second, the researchers will conduct an interview in September of the last year's teachers of the targeted students to indicate possible lack of parent involvement. Third, information from the registration cards will be used to document any non-English speaking parents, and working parents. Next, academic tests in Reading and Math, either developed by the teachers or from the curriculum, will be used to document the group's academic achievement. Finally, the researchers will respond in their journals each week to document any changes and/or improvements in their student's academic habits.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase parental involvement to improve academic achievement in the subject areas of math and reading. The use of several two-way communication instruments and the practice of offering at home academic parental assistance information were selected to effect the desired outcomes. In addition to these, the implementation of parent/student interactive homework and the regular distribution of student work for parental comment and review were used.

A variety of tools were put into affect to enforce two-way communication. Original plans called for the teachers to use the telephone to inform parents of positive and negative concerns on a regular basis. Also, teacher checklists were devised to inform the parents of work completion and graded assignments on a weekly basis. Assignment books were another communication instrument. Each student was given a book to record daily homework. The books provided space for the teacher and/or parent to comment. Parents were asked to view the book daily and verify the completion and accuracy of the assigned work before signing it. Likewise, improved communication between the non-English speaking parents was attempted with the help of an interpreter. Occasionally a person was brought in by the teacher's request to orally translate conversations between the teacher and parent. An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher from another building in the district and an older bi-lingual student were also used to translate written letters and documents. Finally, to ensure all communication avenues, the teachers provided parents with the fax numbers to the schools at the beginning of the year.

To improve and increase parent academic involvement, the teachers provided the parents with information regarding how they could assist learning at home. A program

orientation was conducted at Open House, monthly newsletters were sent home, and guides in assisting particular academic skills were offered. A sample of the monthly newsletter can be found in Appendix G. Furthermore, interactive math and reading homework that was to be completed with a parent was sent home weekly. A sample of the math and reading homework can be found in Appendices H and I. Finally, a weekly folder containing all graded papers was sent home for the parents to review and comment. Included in this folder was a list of any missing or incomplete assignments and the teacher's comments. A sample of this can be found in Appendix J. Also, a notice of commendable effort and success was acknowledged using a Student Information Report. A sample of this can be found in Appendix K.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Figure 7 exhibits the student responses from the pre and post survey questions that asked about the frequency of communication between them and their parents. It was noted that there was one less survey completed in February than in September. When comparing the total number of responses of the two surveys, there was a 3% increase for questions that were responded with always and a 9% increase for those who answered usually. In addition to this, there was a 2% decline for sometimes responses and a 10% decrease for questions that were answered with a never. These percentages advocate an increase in communication as reported by the students.

Survey Question	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Discuss school day	16%	26%	9%	26%	63%	48%	13%	0%
Discuss homework	50%	42%	16%	23%	28%	32%	6%	3%
Ask for help on HW	22%	32%	6%	23%	63%	42%	9%	3%
Ask someone to study with you	28%	23%	19%	16%	31%	55%	22%	6%

Figure 7: Communication frequency according to the students

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The students were also asked about academic assistance in both the pre and post surveys. These results are disclosed in Figure 8. When comparing the number of responses to these questions, there was an increase of 4% in reported parent assistance over the course of the project.

Survey Item	Myself		A Parent		A Friend		A Sibling		Other	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Who checks your homework	28%	35%	59%	52%	3%	6%	6%	6%	3%	0%
Who helps you with school work	22%	16%	44%	61%	3%	3%	19%	6%	13%	13%

Figure 8: Academic assistance frequency according to the student

Figure 9 displays the results of both the pre and post parent survey questions concerned with parent communication and involvement within the school. According to these numbers, there was a 1% increase of parents who answered always to these questions and a 3% increase who answered frequently. There was a 3% decline of parents who responded occasionally and a 3% drop in never responses. After studying this data it appears that a slight increase of parent communication/involvement, however; the researchers noted fewer parents participated in the post surveys. Only 24 out of 34 post parent surveys were returned, whereas 27 out of 34 completed the surveys at the start of the study.

Survey item	Always		Frequently		Occasionally		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Attend Open House	63%	58%	19%	17%	15%	13%	4%	13%
Attend Parent Teacher Conf	89%	96%	4%	4%	0%	0%	7%	0%
Attend PTA meetings	4%	0%	0%	4%	7%	17%	89%	67%
Contact your child's teacher	15%	25%	19%	17%	44%	38%	22%	8%
Contact the principal	11%	4%	7%	13%	37%	17%	44%	67%

Figure 9: Parental communication/involvement within the school according to parents

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Once again, parents were asked to answer survey questions about the frequency of their academic involvement at home. Figure 10 compares the percentages of parent responses from the post surveys to the pre survey responses. There was a 4% increase of parents who answered always to the questions. and a 6% decline to those who answered never. This possibly suggests that more parents became involved at home in regards to their child's academics after the intervention were implemented.

Survey Item	Always		Frequently		Occasionally		Never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Go to the library with your child	7%	20%	37%	25%	44%	46%	11%	8%
Read aloud to your child	15%	17%	37%	38%	26%	38%	22%	8%
Listen to your child read	37%	42%	44%	42%	15%	17%	4%	0%
Discuss your child's school day	70%	79%	19%	13%	7%	8%	4%	0%
Child seeks your help with school work	48%	42%	41%	38%	7%	17%	4%	4%
Help child with homework on regular basis	48%	75%	22%	13%	11%	13%	15%	19%
Study with your child for tests	67%	46%	26%	33%	4%	17%	4%	4%

Figure 10: Parental academic involvement at home according to the parents

After reviewing the parent and student survey questions, the researchers analyzed the responses for similar questions. They found some inconsistencies with the reported data. For example, the parents and the students were asked how often discussions about the school day occurred. The parent survey results indicated that 79% of them always discuss their child's day, whereas only 26% of the students reported always having these discussions. Parallel inconsistencies were apparent throughout the survey results. The researchers thought that these differences in perception among the parents and students were an important consideration when analyzing this data.

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In order to assess the affects of their interventions, the researchers kept a weekly journal. In regards to communicating with parents via the telephone, the researchers found that more often the phone was used to discuss negative issues rather than positive ones. They reported having a difficult time reaching parents because of their diverse work schedules. The teachers felt it inappropriate to disturb a parent at work to just mention positive feedback. Whereas, when a negative issue arose, they were more willing to interrupt a parent at their place of employment. Although this occurred, the teachers did complete at the very least 1 to 2 positive phone calls a week. In both cases the parents were compliant and responded with great appreciation for the personal contact.

Analysis of assignment book usage resulted in a few findings. One finding was that some parents did not use the tool properly. Many parents would sign a book even though their child did not complete the listed assignment or completed it incorrectly. Thirty-eight percent of the parent participants did not sign the book at all on a regular basis. Overall, it was found that the students who had their assignment notebooks signed on a regular basis were the ones who had their work completed on time, and those students also performed better on reading and math homework assignments and tests.

The use of a translator resulted in positive feedback from the non-English speaking parents. One of the researcher's journal entries reflected on a conference with a non-English speaking parent. The parent handed the teacher a box of ethnic candy while the translator expressed the parent's gratitude for the translated material. The researcher noted that this student had a tremendous improvement in her grades from first quarter to second quarter due to some of the strategies implemented to overcome the language barrier. The other researcher noted a marked improvement in academic concerns when a translator was implemented in a second meeting with a non-English speaking parent compared to the first meeting without a translator. The researchers also noted in their

journals that none of the parents used the fax machine as a way of communicating with them.

The researchers documented in their journals that they thought the Open House orientation was effective; however, poor parent attendance had to be considered. The monthly newsletters were also beneficial for informing parents of what was going on in the classroom. For example, when materials needed for an upcoming class project were listed in the newsletter many parents made sure their child had them. One researcher observed that a couple of students who never took the newsletter home also did not have their materials. One researcher noted that some parents never or rarely read the newsletter. This assumption was made because of the continued lack of participation in many of the activities that were listed within the newsletter. For example, the researcher asked the parents in every newsletter to sign the assignment notebooks every day and this was still not being done. Some parents mentioned at conferences that the guides that were sent home to help with particular skills were indeed helpful. Once again, there were circumstances where the student did not bring these home and the parent was not able to assist.

One major aspect of increasing parent involvement at home was to offer the parents activities they could complete with their child to assist learning. In order to do this, the researchers sent home weekly reading or math homework activities that corresponded with the concepts being taught in school. It was found that many of these activities were not being completed at all and/or were being turned in late. The researchers monitored the frequency of the interactive homework assignments that were turned in on time. In regards to the reading activities, on researcher documented only 5 out of 23 participants completed all 6 of the assignments by the due date. The other researcher's class resulted in 0 out of 11 participants completed the 8 assignments by the due date. The on time completion rate for the math activities were not much different.

One targeted class had 4 out of 23 students that completed 7 assignments on time and the other group had 2 out of 11 who completed 6 assignments on time. The researchers did find that the students who handed their interactive assignments on time usually scored better on unit tests than those students who were chronically late or their assignments were incomplete. Also, one researcher discovered that many students were doing some of the activities by themselves and then the parents would sign the sheet verifying that it was completed. This resulted in many of the activities being completed incorrectly.

The researchers were met with many obstacles from the very beginning. They were unable to maintain their original action plan schedule due to the lengthy amount of time it took to receive signed consent forms and surveys back from the parents. Often second and third reminders needed to be sent home asking the parents to return the forms as soon as possible. One researcher noted that when she talked to some parents, they stated they never received the forms. They were eager to begin their interventions but could not due to the time it took to get things returned. Similar difficulties were encountered when the researchers attempted to implement the bi-monthly checklists and graded text response forms. Due to the difficulties in having these signed and returned, this intervention was discontinued. The teachers continued to keep informal records regarding work completion and graded assignments, and this information was shared with the parents on a weekly basis.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on parent involvement and academic improvement in the areas of math and reading, the parents demonstrated a modest increase in their involvement. As shown in Figure 11, there was also a slight improvement in student test scores in the area of reading. However, the data showed a decline in math scores. One possible explanation for this decrease could be the difference of difficulty levels between the two tests administered. The first test given to

the targeted students was not as difficult because it covered a lot of material that was a review of the skills learned at the end of the previous school year. The second test however, covered newly learned math skills that proved to be more difficult for them to grasp.

Grading Scale		Math Unit Tests		Reading Unit Tests	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post
A	(93-100%)	24%	6%	18%	29%
B	(85-92%)	29%	35%	15%	38%
C	(76-84%)	15%	35%	32%	9%
D	(70-75%)	26%	15%	21%	12%
F	(0-69%)	6%	9%	15%	12%

Figure 11: Unit test scores before and after parent involvement interventions

The strategies that were used by the researchers to increase parent involvement had a positive impact on some of the parents. During both of the formal parent/teacher conferences, the researchers received some beneficial feedback from parents. One parent described the feelings of frustration when she was working on one of the interactive math assignments. The parent explained she was unsure how to complete the assigned task because it had been several years since she had done similar mathematical operations. However, this parent did express the feelings of accomplishment she was able to share with her child once the two of them were able to comprehend the assignment.

Another parent mentioned at conference time how surprised she was at one of the helpful hints listed in the teacher's newsletter. It was suggested that parents read to their children regardless of age. The parent had thought her child was beyond the age of being read to and was pleasantly surprised at the suggestion. She was amazed at how enjoyable both her and her son found the experience. She also commented how the two of them were making it a habit to read to each other.

The researchers concluded that the strategies utilized for increasing parent involvement were helpful. They highly recommend the use of these methods in the

classroom. The researchers did note that some of the methods can be time consuming and that student as well as parent hindrance should be taken into consideration. They also recommend that positive phone calls be left on answering machines when needed. This was something that was overlooked by the researchers. They also suggest that teachers ask parents for any additional numbers that they could use to leave messages, like pagers or cell phones.

Finally, with the help of well intentioned, dedicated teachers, parents can indeed become meaningful participants in their child's education, thus increasing the possibility of academic success.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Form

Dear Parents,

We are currently enrolled in a Field Based Masters program at Saint Xavier University because we are dedicated to our profession and continually striving to expand our students' capacities to learn. As part of this program we will be conducting an action research project concerning parent involvement and its effects on students' academic achievement. You and your child will have the opportunity to partake in this fulfilling and educational research. This project will include various techniques and strategies that will be implemented throughout the course of the semester that may help increase your child's academic success. For example, daily assignment books, weekly checklists, reflection journals, and newsletters may be used. Your child will be asked to complete a survey in September and January. In addition to, you will be invited to add to our data by filling out two surveys. Please keep in mind that all responses need to be honest so our study will be valid and reliable. The surveys will remain confidential and will not affect students' grades.

We thank you in advance for you cooperation. Feel free to contact us at either Rosa Maddock School (708-598-0515) or Harry Fry School (708-599-5554) if you have any questions or concerns.

Ms. Susan Bal
Ms. Jennifer Goc

If you agree to participate, please sign below:

I, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the investigators have explained to me the need for this research, identified the elements involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in the survey, as well as my own. I understand that all information gathered during the research project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

_____
Name of Minor Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian Date

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for Previous Teacher

1. What types of communication, if any, did you have with the parents of the targeted class?

2. How often did the parents communicate with you?

3. For the most part, when you initiated communication was there an immediate response from the parents?

4. What percentage of parents attended parent-teacher conferences?

5. What percentage of parents attended open house?

6. Did any parents come in as a guest speaker? If so, how many and how often?

7. Did any parents volunteer to help out in the classroom? (Not including parties, field trips, etc.) If yes, in what way?

8. What role did parents have in regards to homework?

9. Did parents request supplemental material?

10. Please describe any communication problems you encountered with parents.

Appendix C

Homework Habits--Student Survey
September

1. Do you discuss your school day with your parents?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

2. Do you discuss whether you have homework or if you need to study with your parents?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

3. Do you ask someone at home for help on your homework?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

4. Do you ask someone at home to help you study for upcoming tests?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

5. Does a parent have you correct mistakes or redo messy homework?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

6. Do you read independently and/or with someone at home?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

Appendix C cont.

7. Who usually checks your homework before you turn it in to the teacher?

Myself | One of my parents | Classmate/ friend | Sibling

Other:_____

8. Who usually helps you with your schoolwork?

Myself Teacher Sibling Parent Friend

Other: _____

9. Where do you usually do your homework?

Kitchen table In front of TV On my bed In a quiet area

Other: _____

10. When do you usually do your homework?

After school After dinner Before bedtime In the morning

Other: _____

11. What other information can you provide regarding your work and study habits at home?

Appendix D

Homework Habits--Student Survey
February

1. Do you discuss your school day with your parents?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

2. Do you discuss whether you have homework or if you need to study with your parents?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

3. Do you ask someone at home for help on your homework?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

4. Do you ask someone at home to help you study for upcoming tests?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

5. Does a parent have you correct mistakes or redo messy homework?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

6. Do you read independently and/or with someone at home?

   Always Usually Sometimes Never

Appendix D cont.

7. Who usually checks your homework before you turn it in to the teacher?

Myself | One of my parents | Classmate/ friend | Sibling

Other:_____

8. Who usually helps you with your schoolwork?

Myself | Teacher | Sibling | Parent | Friend

Other: _____

9. Where do you usually do your homework?

Kitchen table | In front of TV | On my bed | In a quiet area

Other: _____

10. When do you usually do your homework?

After school | After dinner | Before bedtime | In the morning

Other: _____

11. What other information can you provide regarding your work and study habits at home?

Appendix E

Parent/Guardian Survey-September

Part A: Please check the answer that best describes how often you are involved with the following.

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
1. Do you attend the following:				
Open House	____	____	____	____
Parent/teacher Conferences	____	____	____	____
School Plays, Sporting Events	____	____	____	____
PTA Meetings	____	____	____	____
2. Do you contact your child's teacher?	____	____	____	____
3. Do you contact the school's principal?	____	____	____	____
4. Do you chaperone for field trips?	____	____	____	____
5. Do you volunteer to help out with classroom activities?	____	____	____	____
6. Do you go to the library with your child?	____	____	____	____
7. Do you purchase educational materials to assist your child with school?	____	____	____	____
8. Do you read aloud to your child?	____	____	____	____
9. Do you listen to you child read?	____	____	____	____
10. Do you discuss the school day with your child?	____	____	____	____
11. Does your child seek your help with homework?	____	____	____	____
12. Do you offer assistance to your child with homework on a regular basis?	____	____	____	____
13. Do you study with your child for upcoming tests and quizzes?	____	____	____	____

Appendix E cont.

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

1. What guidelines are enforced with your child regarding homework, watching television, play time, etc.?

2. Please list the ways in which you are currently involved with your child's academic schooling.

3. What other ways would you like to become more involved with your child's schooling?

Appendix F

Parent/Guardian Survey-February

Part A: Please check the answer that best describes how often you are involved with the following.

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
1. Do you attend the following:				
Open House	____	____	____	____
Parent/teacher Conferences	____	____	____	____
School Plays, Sporting Events	____	____	____	____
PTA Meetings	____	____	____	____
2. Do you contact your child's teacher?	____	____	____	____
3. Do you contact the school's principal?	____	____	____	____
4. Do you chaperone for field trips?	____	____	____	____
5. Do you volunteer to help out with classroom activities?	____	____	____	____
6. Do you go to the library with your child?	____	____	____	____
7. Do you purchase educational materials to assist your child with school?	____	____	____	____
8. Do you read aloud to your child?	____	____	____	____
9. Do you listen to you child read?	____	____	____	____
10. Do you discuss the school day with your child?	____	____	____	____
11. Does your child seek your help with homework?	____	____	____	____
12. Do you offer assistance to your child with homework on a regular basis?	____	____	____	____
13. Do you study with your child for upcoming tests and quizzes?	____	____	____	____

Appendix F cont.

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

1. What guidelines are enforced with your child regarding homework, watching television, play time, etc.?

2. Please list the ways in which you are currently involved with your child's academic schooling.

3. What other ways would you like to become more involved with your child's schooling?

Appendix G

NEWS - U - CAN - USE
1st Edition

WELCOME

I would like to use this first edition of my monthly newsletter to introduce myself and acquaint you with the many new and interesting things you and your child will be experiencing this year. This is my fourth year teaching fourth grade at Fry School. Prior to this I taught fifth grade and Byrd School. I am currently working on a master's degree in teaching and leadership from Saint Xavier University.

I would also like to take this time to stress my feelings about the importance of communication. It is a VITAL component of your child's education. Not only should you communicate often with your child, but with the teacher as well. I welcome and encourage the interchange of thoughts and opinions from my students' parents. In saying that, I want to make it as easy as possible for you to contact me. You can always send a note with your child or give me a call here at school. The number to the office is (708)599-5554. I also have access to a fax machine. The number is (708)599-1348. I am available to speak on the phone or in person, at a scheduled meeting, during any of my planning periods. I have one planning period each day. The schedule is as follows:

M-10:45-11:30, T- 9:05-9:50, W-1:45-2:30,TH-10:00-10:45, F-8:20-9:05

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

Like most any classroom there is a set of rules that each student must know and abide by. I feel it is important that you are aware of them as well. They are as follows:

1. Follow directions.
2. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
3. Always raise you hand to be heard.
4. Listen when someone is talking.
5. Work quietly.

When these rules are not followed on a daily basis, consequences will be enforced. Which are:

1st Offense = Warning
2nd Offense = A 5 minutes of writing after school
3rd Offense = A 10 minutes of writing
4th Offense = A call home

Offenses 2 through 4 will be recorded on a Student Information Report.

STUDENT REPORTS

Student Information Reports will document any misbehavior, uncompleted or late assignments, and failed work. Students who receive a report will not be able to participate in the Friday Afternoon Activity. Instead, they will either have to make corrections on failed work or have a writing assignment. These reports are orange and will appear in the left-hand side of the student's Friday Folder. Please look it over, sign it and have your child return it to school that following Monday. Students who receive zero or one Student Information Report a single month will be rewarded with a Half a Homework Pass, which can be used at the student's discretion.

Student Success Reports will document that all assignments graded during that week were completed on time and received a passing grade. They will also state that appropriate behavior was used each day by the student. These reports are purple and will be in the right hand side of the Friday Folder, along with any assignments that I have looked at.

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Appendix G cont

ASSIGNMENT BOOKS

Your child received an assignment book at the beginning of the year. This is to be used everyday to record any work the student has to complete. Space has been provided for you to check that the work was completed and to verify it with a signature. The books will be checked in the morning and a sticker will be given when there is a signature. At the end of the quarter, students with the most stickers will be rewarded. NOTE: It is very important that you do not sign the book if you haven't checked the work. This can be used as a beneficial tool to help initiate a conversation with your child about what he/she is doing in school.

INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK

Because I feel parents are so important in a child's academic career, occasionally I will assign homework that is to be done together. I do understand many schedules are hectic and will inhibit the completion of this type of assignment. If this occurs, please inform me that you were AWARE of the assignment but just could not assist. No further explanation is necessary.

QUESTION AND ANSWER REVIEW GAME

The class will engage in a unique and fun way of reviewing for a chapter test for Social Studies, Science, and Health. The class is grouped into teams and participates in a question and answer review the day before a test. The game consists of several rounds in which one team member, per round, gets a chance to throw a Velcro ball at a target that is numbered 50, 75, and 100. The number the ball sticks to the value of their question. The team is asked a chapter-related question and determines the answer as a group. The person who throws the ball reports the answer. If the correct answer is given, the team is awarded the allotted number of points. If the answer is not correct, points are deducted from the team's score. Scores from each game are recorded and added. Final standings will be announced at the end of the quarter at which point new teams will be formed.

IN THE CLASSROOM

During the last month the students learned and practiced many useful skills as well as engaged in numerous fun, educational activities. Here is a short summary of what went on. Selected students participated in a Sentence Play, which helped them, as well as the viewers, to know and remember the four different kinds of sentences. They were awesome! The entire class practiced remembering Social Studies vocabulary definitions in a different way. Students worked in groups to come up with a way to teach their assigned word's definition to the rest of the class. Some chose to draw a picture or use body movements to remember, while others created a two-dimensional picture. The students were extremely creative. In Science, we completed a chapter about the wonders of water. After discussing the Scientific Method, the students completed two experiments that demonstrated how water molecules cling together to form a "skin", and how various substances mix with water. The students did a fantastic job during both activities. The class also competed in their first Question and Answer Review Game. They worked very well with their teammates and are looking forward to the next competition.

HELPFUL REMINDERS

1. Talk with your child about his/her school day.
2. Read with your child.
3. Use encouraging words.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Interactive Math Homework

Dear Parents,

Attached you will find a math sheet that I would like you to complete with your child. The activities that you will be doing correspond with the concepts that we are currently learning in Math. The purpose of this activity is to provide the students with some extra math practice at home, and to have them work with someone. Please complete this activity with your child, sign the bottom, and return both sheets to school. Thank you for your cooperation.

THIS IS DUE ON:_____

Student's Signature: _____
Parent's Signature: _____
Date Completed: _____

INTERACTIVE READING HOMEWORK

Please read something: a story, a magazine article, a newspaper article, a textbook, etc., WITH someone and do at least 3 activities listed below. Please show your work on the back or on another sheet of paper. Please complete this reading activity and return to school by : _____

WHAT WAS READ: _____
WHEN IT WAS READ: _____

Please circle the activities you completed together

- THE CHILD READ TO THE ADULT
- THE ADULT READ TO THE CHILD
- WE LOOKED UP 3 UNFAMILIAR WORDS IN THE DICTIONARY TO LEARN THE MEANING
- WE USED A THESAURUS TO FIND SYNONYMS FOR THREE WORDS
- WE DISCUSSED WHAT WE READ ABOUT
- WE DISCUSSED WHAT WE WOULD DO IF WE WERE THE CHARACTER OF THE STORY
- WE FOUND 5 THREE-SYLLABLE WORDS
- WE FOUND 3 HOMOPHONES (Words that sound the same but have different spellings and different meanings; example: four-for, sea-see)
- WE FOUND FIVE CONTRACTIONS
- WE PICKED OUT TEN WORDS AND PUT THEM IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER
- OTHER: _____

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION REPORT

Name of Student _____ Teacher _____

Week _____ Parent Signature _____

READING _____

MATH _____

ENGLISH _____

CREATIVE WRITING _____

SCIENCE _____

HEALTH _____

SOCIAL STUDIES _____

SPELLING _____

HANDWRITING _____

BEHAVIOR _____

TEACHER COMMENTS _____

PARENT COMMENTS _____

STUDENT SUCCESS REPORT

I am happy to inform you that your child, _____, has successfully completed all assignments on time and exhibited appropriate behavior during the week of _____.

Your child's teacher,